



NECESSITY FOR A FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM



ABSTRACT

The return on Investment (ROI) of training relies on follow up.

AFE Consultancy & Training

[Valid for all trainings]

NECESSITY FOR A FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM

Reasons why:

1. Support systems are absolutely essential to increase skill transfer and thus training effectiveness.
2. Failure begins when participants at training courses and workshops are sent back to job with handouts and are left on their own to put training to use. The result: participants are confused and discouraged in applying a new technique or a skill.
3. Furthermore, trainees may lose interest and track of the importance of the training, since no one is encouraging them to make use of it.

Therefore:

If maximum effectiveness is to be achieved, we must put special emphasis on follow-up activities and support systems.

IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOW-UP

It is very important to be able to measure result after a sales person has attended a training seminar. While many managers agree with this statement, they also expect to see immediate results on the sales volume results. Numerous studies have been made of the best or proper way to measure sales training. One of the more interesting was made by the Xerox Corporation. This Xerox survey and study showed that the lack of proper positioning of what the employer expected the employee to gain and follow-up support caused 87% of the skill changes brought in sales training programs to be lost. That is 87 c of each skill dollar.

After learning a new skill, many of us go through an awkward period. A time during which the newly acquired skill does not feel natural. During this time we usually do not achieve the results that we expected. You may equate this to changes in other skills or procedures that you have experienced, such as a new golf stance or a new method of bowling. Immediately after learning this new skill, your score may drop. As you continue to practice, you eventually surpass your old average and this skill continues to pay off for years.

The period immediately following a sales training seminar, which the Xerox study discovered and called the "result dip," is a very critical time for salespeople. In order to be assured that sales representatives continue to use skills acquired during sales training programs, to increase the results (more orders), they need positive reinforcement through the "results dip."

This is not additional coaching or review of their techniques, nor is it just good old "I know you can do it" support. It is much more than this. It is the interest and direction given before the training session and the follow-up immediately after the participant has returned from a seminar or a meeting.

It is important that the supervisors continue to show interest and add positive reinforcement for the next few weeks.

A remark from the supervisor such as, "Well you attended the school. When are we going to see some results?" can cause negative response. The salespersons, in their haste to be productive, may immediately fall back on their old tried and true methods. The same could be true if the supervisor said nothing. The salesperson may be discouraged and stop practicing and using the newly acquired skills. Either way, there goes 87 c of the investment -- wasted.

To prevent this from happening, the early support of the supervisors and managers is critical and can be the key ingredient of a successful project. Later, as they continue to use and become familiar with their new skills, the positive reinforcement will begin to come from an increase in sale--extra orders!

A good understanding of what you expect from them after training and early positive support when they return, protects your original investment, gives you a better return and adds to the success of your organization (See figure "What should happen with a new skill").

Plan now to increase your return on investment in sales training by communicating with your salespeople before they attend training seminars and immediately afterwards. Then offer good, positive support to be assured that every new skill and idea is given the best opportunity for success.

The following is offered as guidelines:

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF TRAINING SESSIONS

Much of the success of a training program, in terms of usefulness, depends on your attitude.

You are encouraged to:

1. Enter into discussions and talk with other participants about common problems and their possible solutions.
2. Be willing to learn from experience. Avoid being critical and insensitive to the aims of the group.
3. Meet new people and avoid "chumming" with people from the same group.
4. Search for new ideas. Try to return from the program with an "action plan" with at least one new idea that will help improve your performance.
5. Listen carefully to learn new ideas from subject content and do not judge a session on the instructor's charm or funny stories.
6. Be involved as much as possible when there are participative activities. Don't be a passive participant.
7. Use time well. This is up to you -- you can make friends, stimulate thinking, get some new ideas, and strengthen your own thoughts -- or waste them.

8. Continually refer to the objectives of the program and ask yourself:

“What am I learning?”

“How can I use this back on the job?”

HOW TO PREPARE PEOPLE FOR TRAINING

To be used by the participant's immediate supervisor as soon as possible after the person has been selected for a training program. Participants will benefit more attending training if you show an interest on their participation and talk to them about it before they attend.

Here are some suggestions for this discussion:

1. Let them know of their selection to attend the program well in advance and discuss why they were selected.
2. Also, let them know what you expect them to gain and relate this to the objectives as well as to their specific job responsibilities.
3. Ask individuals to think of problems they might be able to find solutions to by interacting with other participants.
4. Ask them to be prepared to discuss the program when they return.
5. Assure them that departmental arrangements have been made so that they can concentrate on the program without worrying unnecessarily about their job.
6. When appropriate, cover any necessary expense account arrangements with them.
7. Present the sheet “How to get the most out of training sessions,” and review it with them.

AFTER RETURNING FROM TRAINING

To be used by the participant's immediate supervisor as soon as possible after attending a training session.

If you want your people to get the most benefit from the training, talk to them about it after they get back on the job. Schedule plenty of time for it -- free from distractions and interruptions.

Here are some suggested points to cover:

1. Welcome them back. Ask if the program measured up to their expectations.
2. Ask what was learned.

3. Ask how they intend to use this new knowledge or skill -- specially look for concrete suggestions. Try to get commitments to apply within a set period of time.
4. Suggest that they present to other members of your group certain worthwhile materials or concepts.
5. Do not make this the last discussion you have about the training. Check back several times over the next three to six months to see how they followed through with their plans. Make them accountable for what they have learned.